

United States Senate

July 24, 2014

Mr. Robert Nabors
Deputy Chief of the Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

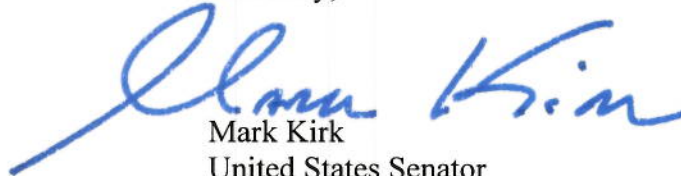
Dear Mr. Nabors:

I appreciate your decision to visit the Department of Veterans Affairs' Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital and Chicago Regional Office. Since the VA scandal broke, numerous veterans and the Hines employees that serve them have approached me with allegations of delayed care and retaliation against whistleblowers perpetuated by the facility's leadership. Hines past and current leadership teams, including Sharon Helman and Joan Ricard, must be held accountable for their failures to Illinois' veterans.

During a July 15 meeting with Robert McDonald, President Obama's nominee to be the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, I asked him to specifically to visit Hines and remove its director. In a letter I gave to Mr. McDonald, I highlighted many of my constituents' concerns with Ricard and the quality of service at Hines, including a veteran whose wait times were manipulated at least 57 times over the course of four years, as well as Hines' leadership's efforts to cover up a backlog of over 700 appointments only as a national media story broke. A May 2014 memo from Director Ricard acknowledges these very efforts to manipulate wait times at Hines. More recently, Hines' backlog of appointments scheduled over thirty days continues to grow – from almost 8,000 to over 8,800 between July 3rd and July 17th. Hines's performance and failure to serve veterans in a timely matter are unacceptable.

During your upcoming visit and before your meeting with the Hines leadership team, I ask that you join me and some of these whistleblowers in my Chicago office to discuss their experiences as employees at the Hines VA. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk
United States Senator